

Resolution 171 of the Medical Society of the State of New York

April 14, 2013

Public Health Implications of Natural Gas Extraction Using Hydraulic Fracturing

Introduced by the Medical Student Section, MSSNY

SUBSTITUTE RESOLUTION ADOPTED

Whereas, there is strong scientific evidence suggesting contamination of drinking water sources near hydraulic fracturing sites with methane and/or chemical compounds used in the hydraulic fracturing process, and that such contamination poses significant risk to public health [1-14]; and

Whereas, a University of Colorado Denver School of Public Health study found that residents living within a 0.5 mile radius of operations utilizing hydraulic fracturing techniques were exposed to levels of volatile organic compounds (VOC's) exceeding EPA hazard guidelines, and that these VOC's are known to pose significant health risks [15]; and

Whereas, other reports of VOC and greenhouse gas emissions elevate concern with respect to the relative efficacy of natural gas extraction on both improvement of air quality and net reduction of greenhouse gas emissions [16-21]; and

Whereas, hydraulic fracturing in New York State has the potential to cause undue health effects as a result of exposure to known or suspected carcinogens, mutagens, endocrine disruptors, neurotoxins, and hazardous air pollutants, creating financial need secondary to costs associated with medical care; and

Whereas, a trust fund was established to mitigate negative sequelae stemming from the British Petroleum (BP) oil spill of 2010 [22]; and

Whereas, there have been multiple reports of physicians in hydraulic fracturing areas encountering difficulty acquiring information regarding patients' chemical exposure and subsequently being faced with "gag orders" that have hampered their ability to consult other physicians and provide quality care [23]; and

Whereas, our Medical Society of the State of New York has already called for a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing pending further risk-assessment studies [24]; therefore be it,

RESOLVED, that the Medical Society of the State of New York reaffirm its Policy on high-volume hydraulic fracturing that states:

"The Medical Society of the State of New York supports a moratorium on natural gas extraction using high volume hydraulic fracturing in New York State until valid information is available to evaluate the process for its potential effects on human health and the environment" (Council Action, December 9, 2010); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Medical Society of the State of New York supports the planning and implementation of a Health Impact Assessment to be conducted by a New York State school of Public Health: and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Medical Society of the State of New York advocate for the establishment of an industry-funded, independently-arbitrated state trust fund for people that may be harmed as a result of hydraulic fracturing: and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Medical Society of the State of New York oppose any non-disclosure provisions related to the practice of hydraulic fracturing that interferes with any aspect of the patient-doctor relationship and/or the ready collection of epidemiological data for future health impact studies.

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